

NOTES ON A GUAYANAN DIEFFENBACHIA (ARACEAE)

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Dieffenbachia duidae (Steayerm.) Bunting, comb. nov. Spathicarpa duidae Steayerm., Fieldiana, Bot. 28: 101. 1951. TYPE: Julian A. Steyermark 57994 (holotype, F). Venezuela. Territorio Federal Amazonas: Depto. Atabapo, Cerro Duida, southeastern-facing slopes along Caño Negro (tributary to Caño Iguapo), 970-1,150 m, 25-26 Aug. 1944.

Dieffenbachia bolivarana Bunting, Bol. Soc. Venez. Ci. Nat. 25: 30. 1963.

Dieffenbachia liesneri Croat, Aroideana 9: 62. 1986.

Though the type specimen has not been seen (it cannot be located), the original description of Spathicarpa duidae leaves little doubt regarding the species represented, and the type locality (Cerro Duida) complements the known distribution of this taxon in T. F. Amazonas from the upper and lower Río Ventuari to Cerro Aratitiope, Sierra Parima, and Cerro de la Neblina. This species also grows in eastern Bólivar (Uaipán-tepui, Chimantá Massif, and Amaruy-tepui), and in adjacent Guyana (southern Pakaraima Mountains). It has an altitudinal range of 115-1,600 m, reaching the maximum on Chimantá Massif.

While Spathicarpa and Dieffenbachia are only distantly related, it is possible to find certain similarities in the rather small inflorescences common to both Spathicarpa spp. and Dieffenbachia duidae. The spadix of Spathicarpa is entirely adnate to the open spathe and bears pistillate and staminate flowers intermixed. On the other hand, only the lower pistillate part of the spadix of Dieffenbachia is adnate to the spathe, while the upper, staminate part is free. After anthesis, however, the upper, free part quickly dries and is often caducous, leaving only the pistillate part of spadix enclosed in the persistent spathe and bearing female flowers surrounded by several staminodes which might, at least in poorly preserved specimens, be interpreted as intermixed pistillate and staminate flowers. In his original description of this species, Steyermark duly noted that "the flowering part of the specimen is in poor condition". However, the rhizomatous or cormous stem and the reticulate venation of the leaf blade of Spathicarpa are sufficient bases for distinguishing it from the cauline Dieffenbachia with striate leaf venation.

Spathicarpa does not occur in Venezuela, being limited to southern Brazil, Paraguay, and northern Argentina.

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